

Fourth Rural Convention Ends

Bishop Henschke opening Rural Convention at "Tay Creggan," Wednesday, March 10

Archbishop's Review of "Magnificent Success"

THE fourth annual convention of the National Catholic Rural Movement was brought to a close on Friday evening at "Tay Creggan," Hawthorn, when delegates heard inspiring addresses by Messrs. D. G. M. Jackson, M.A., B. A. Santamaría, B.A., LL.B. (national secretary of the movement), and his Grace the Archbishop. The episcopal chairman of the N.C.R.M., Most Rev. F. Henschke, D.D., Bishop of Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., presided.

Following the addresses of Mr. Jackson and Mr. Santamaría, published elsewhere in this issue, his Grace the Archbishop, on rising to speak, was greeted by a prolonged ovation.

THE ARCHBISHOP'S ADDRESS

Mr. Jackson, "Onlooker" and Poet

"Having heard two most inspiring addresses," said his Grace, "I can well estimate all I have lost by not being able to attend your conference now closing. But I am fortunate, at all events, in having listened to two of the most inspiring addresses that I have ever heard. (App.) Mr. Jackson is not merely our 'Onlooker,' but he is also a poet, as he has put the ideals of your movement into poetic prose, the memory of which, I am sure, will last until you come to hear him again this time next year. (App.) I join with you in thanking him for the inspiration of his words. (App.)

Mr. Santamaría, "Little Dynamo"

"Mr. Santamaría is a little dynamo. (App.) If only I had the hundredth part of his energy

and eloquence, I probably would have converted somebody. I do believe I have never converted anybody to my way of thinking. Once again he has placed you and me and the whole movement under a debt of deep gratitude. We are thankful to him not merely for his stirring address to-night, but also for all the work that he has put into the organisation of this great conference, which, I understand, has been a magnificent success. (App.)

"You started at the right point by having Fr. Hackett and the Provincial of the Jesuits (Fr. Meagher) to put the spiritual side of the movement prominently before you. Though you discussed many things since, I am sure that the point of view put before you at the retreat has not been lost sight of.

Debt to Bishop of Wagga Wagga

"I would like to acknowledge my own great debt of gratitude, as well as yours, to the Bishop of Wagga. (App.) I have come here at the end, but he was with you at the beginning, and I understand that as chairman he can scarcely be excelled. (App.) If he were not chairman of this movement he might have a prominent place at Canberra or somewhere else. (Laughter and applause.) His heart is in the movement and he is absolutely

sincere. He is thoroughly devoted to your interests and the interests of the land movement and he has been, and will continue to be, I hope, a tower of strength to the rural movement on which so much depends.

Ladies of the Grail

"I would also like to thank the Ladies of the Grail, who have made their own contribution to the success of this conference. (App.) It only shows their great generosity and their unbounded versatility in being able to tackle a thing like this. I know that all of you are grateful to them. I certainly am. I hope that our gratitude will remain and be a lasting memory of this conference. (App.) I am grateful, also, to all the speakers whom I did not hear. I take it for granted they were all on a level with the three we have heard to-night.

"Though I was not here I have been trying to watch the movement in the press, but I find that the papers have not devoted very much attention to the meetings. They seem to be more interested in your photographs than in your

movement or your ideals or principles. Possibly that has its explanation for us. Somebody has said that you have a long way to go, and that you are only at the very beginning. The press would not be true to itself, if it showed interest in the race until it was already almost run and won. (Laughter.) But with, or without the help of the papers, you stand on firm ground, and you put first things first. (App.) That is the reason that you have thrown yourselves wholeheartedly into this great rural movement.

God's Own Designing

"There is no need for me to go over the main reasons that have been so beautifully expounded by Messrs. Jackson and Santamaría, but it is enough for me to know, and probably enough for you, too, that the rural industry is of God's own designing. (App.) It was the first of all industries; God started it. (App.) We should not be ashamed of it. Other industries are man-made.

But the rural industry was started in the Garden of Eden. The man may not have been altogether a happy one. (Laughter.) But your movement goes back to the very beginning of man's history and it will remain in the end. Keeping first things first, you realise that we may win the war and lose the peace. Even before the war we were losing the peace, as the country was bleeding to death; in fact, we had almost lost it. But you are not tackling post-war problems at the right spirit. If you succeed and realise your hopes, you will win the war and then the long drawn-out battle to win the peace as well." (App.)

Bishop Henschke said they had shown their appreciation of the visit of his Grace and his splendid address by their sustained applause. They had now reached the close of the conference. Members would soon return to their own districts and he hoped they would go back strengthened by the spirit of the conference and with greater courage to face the future. (App.)

Highlights of the Convention

THE annual convention of the National Catholic Rural Movement was held at "Tay Creggan," Hawthorn, from March 10 to 12. Two hundred delegates from various parts of the Commonwealth—West Australia excepted—made a representative assembly and were an eloquent reminder of the great growth of the movement.

Many clergy from different States were present, and the conference was attended for a time by Archbishop Bovich, of Adelaide, and Bishop O'Collins, of Ballarat. A telegraphic message was read from Bishop Hayes, of Rockhampton, Q'land, who wished the conference every success. In addition to the men's sessions, the clergy and women also held their own special sessions. Bishop F. A. Henschke, of Wagga, N.S.W., national episcopal chairman of the N.C.R.M., presided.

SECRETARY'S ASSISTANCE

The success of the conference was in a large measure due to Mr. B. A. Santamaría, national secretary of the movement, who paved the way for clear understanding and smoothness of debate by his readiness in elucidating knotty points and explaining the plans of operation. He was well assisted by Mr. E. J. Hogan and Miss Noreen Minogue. On Tuesday, March 9, Very Rev. J. Meagher, S.J., conducted a retreat for the men, and Very Rev. W. P. Hackett, S.J., conducted a retreat for the women. Solemn High Mass was celebrated in Xavier College chapel on Wednesday morning, March 10.

The presidential report by Bishop Henschke at the opening session at "Tay Creggan" appeared in last week's issue of "The Advocate." The report of the national secretary on the National Enquiry on Rural Debt was also published in the same issue.

Bishop Henschke welcomed the delegates, and said the large

Delegates Discuss Problems

attendance was an indication of the ever-increasing interest taken in the movement. He was pleased to say the rural movement had come to stay.

RURAL DEBT ENQUIRY

After giving his report on the National Enquiry into Rural Debt, Mr. Santamaría said it was a colossal task. He thought the enquiry would be two-thirds achieved at the end of this year, and that the official report would be published at the end of next year. To the 2000 questionnaires sent out, 600 replies had already been received, and he was hopeful that the committee engaged in the task would eventually have 3000 replies on which to base its conclusions. Mr. Santamaría gave an interesting broadcast of the N.C.R.M. over Station 3LO on Wednesday night.

Speaking on co-operation, Mr. J. M. Gollasch, of Lockhart, N.S.W., said that the basic idea of the movement was to help one another. This demanded Christian charity and sacrifice, without which co-operation would not bring them very far. They should keep the spiritual side

ever before them and build on the Gospel lessons. In that way they would be co-operating with God.

CREDIT UNION DEBATE

The principle of credit unions was the subject of a spirited debate between Mr. N. Vowles, Spalding, who took the affirmative side, and Mr. T. Hanrahan, of Bungaree, the negative side. Mr. Vowles said that the adoption of credit unions would be a great deal in wresting the power of finance from the hands of people who for too long have given a poor account of the stewardship. Mr. Hanrahan considered that credit unions were unnecessary and that the best was from them were negligible.

Rev. J. Cleary strongly supported credit unions, and Santamaría said they were operating successfully in different countries, where they had been instrumental in increasing farming population.

Bishop Henschke said the principle had been successfully adopted by Italian settlers in irrigated districts in his diocese.

It was decided to encourage groups to establish credit unions and pamphlets will be distributed.

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Deplorable Street Scenes

The Archbishop's Comment

"I AM going to say a few words about a matter that has really little to do with your conference," said his Grace the Archbishop at the closing session of the Catholic Rural Conference on Friday night. "You have come here from the sweet and wholesome atmosphere of the country. If you have not been in the streets of Melbourne at night, you have, at all events, been reading in the papers of the lamentable things that are said to be happening in the city streets. This city is no exception. What is happening here is, I fear, happening elsewhere; and the scenes in our Australian city streets are deplorable.

CREATURES OF CIRCUMSTANCES

"Some people say that the trouble has come because of the war. The war, no doubt, has increased the evil. But the root cause goes back before the war. In Australia, as Mr. Jackson pointed out, home life in many cases is non-existent, and parental control is a thing of the past. The result, of course, is that young people are growing up soft, pleasure-loving, irresponsible, undisciplined, unwilling to control themselves for any ideal. We have got shorter hours of labour and bigger wages. But many of us do not know what to do with our leisure or how to spend our money, with discrimination.


"The young people, of whom we hear so many complaints, are not, perhaps, as bad as they seem to be; they are merely creatures of the circumstances in which they have grown up. They probably deserve sympathy and pity

rather than harsh condemnation. Some of the soldiers who have come in for so much censure have too much money in their pockets and too much time on their hands. The streets are full of undisciplined girls looking for excitement, no matter what the cost. Their fathers are perhaps working a night shift, and their mothers are away from home at war work. Even if both were at home it might not make much difference; for the young people are not the only ones to be frivolous and undisciplined.

NEED SYMPATHY AND HELP

"Young and old, too many do not know how to use their leisure or their money. They have no taste for the fine things of life. Reading, music, rational amusement, even rational or intelligent conversation make no appeal to them. They fall back exclusively upon the elemental pleasures of eating and of drinking, and of sexual associations which man shares with lower creation. They do not know any higher or better. The consequences are disastrous. But, as I have said, the victims need and deserve our sympathy and help rather than condemnation. "I am glad to know that the Premier of the State is deeply concerned about the night life of the city and the scenes that are reported from our streets and parks. I am sure that he can count upon the co-operation of all decent citizens in any effort that he makes to protect our young people from the moral dangers to which, in these days especially, they are daily and nightly exposed."

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